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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000854

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SUBJECT: GOK VIEWS ON 2010 NPT REVCON

REF: STATE 83600

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) Polcounselor on August 27 raised reftel points concerning the May 2010 NPT review conference (Revcon), with Jassem Al-Najem, MFA lead on NPT issues. In delivering points, Polcounselor noted Embassy interest in initiating a sustained dialogue on NPT and related non-proliferation issues and sought Al-Jassem's views on the likelihood of GOK participation in the Revcon and in similar non-proliferation fora.

¶2. (C) Al-Najem, who had only recently returned to Kuwait after several years at the UN, said he anticipated the GOK would attend the Revcon, but noted that Kuwait -- along with many other members of the Arab League -- had felt sharp disappointment at the most recent (2005) Revcon's failure to address the interest of many Arab countries in examining modalities for establishing a nuclear free zone in the Middle East, noting particular disappointment with Egypt's leadership of the AL bloc on this issue. Al-Najem said that Kuwait shared the view of other Arab countries that this failure on the part of the Revcon unreasonably left the field open to Israel -- as a non-signatory of the NPT -- as the region's only nuclear-armed power. Al-Najem said he hoped the 2010 Revcon would make up some lost ground on this issue.

¶3. (C) Concerning GOK views on the CTBT, FMCT and other non-proliferation fora, and on the process through which the GOK addresses non-proliferation policy questions, Al-Najem noted that Kuwait, as a small, non-nuclear state with limited scientific and military resources, does not possess much "clout" on non-proliferation matters and does not seek to play a leadership role; instead, it strives for consensus with other GCC and NAM states, always urging a rational "middle ground" approach aimed at enhancing regional security. Al-Najem reiterated the GOK's long-standing concern about Iran's nuclear program and noted ongoing GOK encouragement for international community efforts to convince Iran to accept IAEA safeguards.

¶4. (C) Al-Najem noted that the GOK's policy-making process on arms proliferation issues -- as in many other areas -- is a fairly informal one, reflecting Kuwait's small size. The GOK's policy positions on these issues, Al-Najem said, are generally formulated in MFA's International Organizations bureau, following input from other MFA departments and from Kuwait's embassies abroad, as well as via informal consultations with notable policy analysts. These positions are then conveyed to the Foreign Minister, who will generally vet important policy positions with the Council of Ministers. As is typical of Kuwait, decisions are generally arrived at by a process of up-and-down discussion aimed at developing a consensus, rather than emanating from a single source.

¶5. (C) Comment: Al-Najem accurately portrayed the informal,

consensus-based nature of the GOK's policy-making process. As in many areas, Kuwait's small size and sense of vulnerability lead it to seek common ground with its GCC neighbors, a tactic that both protects it from direct criticism and increases its diplomatic leverage. On non-proliferation matters, GOK's energies will remain focused on encouraging safeguards on Iran and supporting (but not leading) the efforts of other Arab League countries to direct attention to a perceived threat from Israel.

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